

Coaches Corner 8

Getting the most out of training

At Bentleigh Lakers each team is allocated one hour for training with only a half or sometimes even a third of a court for space. With these limitations coaches need to try and get the optimum use out of every minute they have.

Things like game debrief and warm up laps may be useful but they don't have to take time out of that precious 60 minutes of court time. If these are things you want to do with your team then get the kids to the court 5, 10, 15 minutes early. Use the gymnasium foyers for stretches and debriefs use the school grounds for running warm ups.

Be prepared as a coach with all your skill and drill training for that session. If we are spending time as a coach trying to think up the next drill on the run we are either not dedicating ourselves sufficiently to supervising the drill in progress or we have players standing around whilst we work out what we want them to do.

Our skills/drills can focus on transition, game style, set plays or technique. Transition drills are important but difficult due to our court limitations. It is well worth talking to the other coach/s that share the court with you and combining the teams for a period to run some full court transition drills. I don't believe set plays have a great deal of value at the domestic level. It relies too heavily on all the kids knowing how to execute their roles and doesn't help them improve as individual players; which should be a primary focus. When looking at whether to focus predominantly on 'game style' or technique based coaching we should look largely at the players experience levels. The younger or newer the player is to the game the more we should focus on correct technique for each skill being taught. If kids get this right at an early stage, it can stay with them for life. Trying to get an established player to change bad technique may be a case of banging your head against brick wall, and in many cases some players have managed to make a deficiency in technique work well for them anyway. With these types of teams we are better of focusing more of the session on 'game style'. Practice what it is we want to implement on game day.

Regardless of what we are teaching doesn't tolerate a lack of effort. The effort the kids put in at training is the one thing they have 100% control over. The amount of effort they expend will directly reflect the improvement they make as players. Laziness at training spreads faster than a virus; so be on guard. Better to have a kid sit out until they are ready to up their effort than infect the team.

Finally a word on scrimmage matches. Coaches often run these at the end of training, and typically kids love taking part. I think they are excellent if they are used to practice what we have been learning at training. If however they become 10 minutes of, 'a bit of fun', all they do is cement bad habits. The best players use it as a chance to show-off and the weakest are simply reminded of their place in the pecking order. Use scrimmage matches as a reward for a good training session when appropriate, and be willing to pull the plug on them if the players are not trying to implement the skills or game plays that you have been teaching them.

And remember

Good coaching always beats good luck